

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2586

As Reported by House Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks

Title: An act relating to charter licenses.

Brief Description: Modifying definitions of charter licenses.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Buck, Williams, Chase, Buri, McCoy, Morris, Flannigan, Eickmeyer, B. Sullivan and Kessler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Natural Resources, Ecology & Parks: 1/31/06, 2/2/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes that charter boats include all vessels that charge a fee to fish, whether or not any fish are caught, or whether they are caught and then released.
- Clarifies the area where a salmon charter license is required, which includes Puget Sound, Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay, Pacific Ocean waters, Lake Washington, and the Columbia River below the bridge at Longview.
- Clarifies that Oregon charter vessels need a Washington charter license if they take on passengers in Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Upthegrove, Vice Chair; Buck, Ranking Minority Member; Kretz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Blake, Chandler, Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Hunt, Kagi and Orcutt.

Staff: Amy Van Horn (786-7168).

Background:

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) requires charter fishing boats to obtain an annual license. A salmon charter license currently costs \$380 for residents and \$685 for non-residents. A non-salmon charter license, required for all food fish and shellfish besides salmon, costs \$225 for residents and \$375 for non-residents. The charter license is required in

all saltwater areas of the state, in Lake Washington, and in the area of the Columbia River below the Longview Bridge. A charter license is not required in any other lakes or other freshwater areas such as rivers and streams.

A licensed Oregon charter boat may operate in the coast off Washington up to Leadbetter Point without a Washington charter license, provided it does not land at any Washington port with the purpose of taking on or discharging passengers.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A charter boat is defined as a boat from which persons may fish for a fee. Previously, a charter license was required only for the "taking" of fish, which excluded both boats hired out for catch-and-release fishing and unsuccessful fishing trips.

The definition of a charter boat is changed to include vessels from which persons may, for a fee, fish for food fish or shellfish for personal use in specified state or offshore waters. Those state waters are Puget Sound, Grays Harbor, Willapa Bay, Pacific Ocean waters, Lake Washington, and the Columbia River below the bridge at Longview.

A licensed Oregon charter boat may operate in the coast off Washington up to Leadbetter Point without a Washington charter license, so long as the vessel does not take on or discharge passengers from the Washington shore.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill clarifies the state waters where a charter boat license is required. The substitute bill removes a provision defining a charter boat as a vessel where food fish or shellfish are brought into Washington waters or ports.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support of the original bill) The charter business has faced many challenges over the past 25 years and one current challenge is competition from charters operating illegally. This bill will help the legitimate charter boat industry, because the illegal charter industry is real and profitable. Illegal charters can make over \$700 a day, and enforcement agencies currently lose court cases against illegal charters because of a technical problem in the current law. This bill does not change the intent of the charter vessel license provisions, but would allow better enforcement of the current law. Officers are having trouble enforcing the law because of several loopholes, which can be closed by clarifying the language.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support of original bill) Representative Blake, prime sponsor; Ed Owens, Hunters Heritage Council; Mark Cedergreen, Westpoint Charter Boat Association; and Mike Cenci, Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.